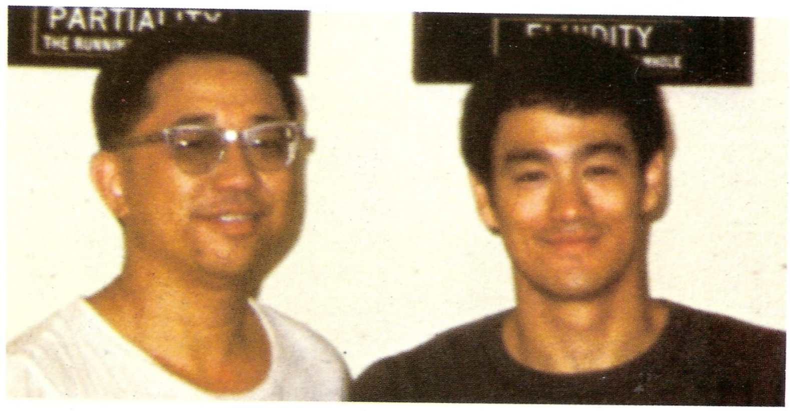


Bruce Lee/Daniel Lee Telephone Conversation

Introduction



What follows is the newly revised and unabridged transcript of a telephone call that took place between Daniel Lee and Bruce Lee in 1971. Daniel Lee was one of the first students Bruce Lee signed up at his Chinatown school. At the time, Bruce was back in the U.S. and preparing to relocate back to Hong Kong following the success of his second film, 'The Chinese Connection.' (titled 'Fists of Fury' in China). Dan Lee recorded his telephone conversation with the realization that Bruce was going away for a few years and he didn't know when he was going to see him again, so he thought he would ask him some questions that would help him with his own training in JKD. It is a nice, casual conversation, not only between teacher and student, but between friends, in which Bruce spoke openly about various subjects including, martial arts, dealing with challenges from other people, and his work and goals in the film industry.

I have had the conversation on audiotape for many years, and awhile ago one of my students ran the conversation through some computer equipment to clean it up and put it onto CD. I have listened to it numerous times to make sure I got everything right on the conversation, however there are a couple of points where it is still difficult to get everything, because in some sections the two talk at the same time. I have also reviewed John Little's version of the talk.

Also, in the section discussing Bruce's film, The Chinese Connection, it is hard to understand what name he refers to his character as. I looked it up on the internet and it lists his character's name as Chen Zhen and his teacher's name as Huo Yuanjia (Fok Kuen Gap). (**I have added the Chinese words in this new version).** Still, I believe for the most part the conversation is correctly transcribed. I have left all of the pauses in and did not attempt to correct any grammar because I want the reader to literally "hear it as it was spoken." There is one section of the conversation which, on the tape has been edited or removed, and I have noted that point in the transcript. I remember hearing the version which had not been altered, and if my memory serves me well, there was a short conversation in which Bruce comments to Dan Lee about making sure that Dan (Inosanto) did not allow any "mavericks" into the JKD training. However, as it is not on the CD I have not included anything about it in the transcript.

The tape begins midway through a sentence spoken by Bruce, who is discussing how unprepared for real combat the Chinese martial artists were that he witnessed during a recent tournament in Hong Kong.

Finally, I have made this transcript available free of charge for everyone. So if you paid someone for it, you have been ripped off.

Chris Kent

Dan Lee/Bruce Lee Phone conversation



Bruce Lee: ...You saw the Tai Chi self-defense. You saw all the self defense in there... I mean... It’s all posturing.
Dan: Yeah.
Bruce: Well Dan, Dan, Dan, I mean, I hate to tell you this, and that is if you were there, with me plus a foreign friend sitting by us watching all the Goks and Bai Choys, Jesus, we will be so embarrassed.
Dan: Yeah it's sort of like a free brawl...
Bruce: No, it's not even a free brawl. See a free brawl, it, at least... I mean, that’s Joe Frazier. Where there's a man who is capable of using his tools and who is very determined in his savage, relentless attack. Whereas those sons-of-a-bitches are cowardice... I mean, turning their heads, swinging their punches, and after the second round they are out of breath. I mean, they're really pathetic looking, very, very amateurish. I mean even a boxer, because a boxer, when they concentrate on two hands, disregard of how amateurish they are, they do their thing...
Dan: That’s right, they’re in the water. They...
Bruce: But whereas those guys go out there and they haven't decided what the hell they're going to use. I mean, before they contact each other they do all their fancy stance and all the fancy movements but the minute they contact, they just... don't know what the hell to do. I mean that's it. They miss and fall on their asses and they tug and hold and wrestle. I mean, the whole Hong Kong... they call it “little kids fighting.” In Hong Kong, even those guys see it that way. I mean, what do you think of the appreciation of the people here, period?
Dan: Their level is so...
Bruce: So what I'm hoping to do with film is to do just that man, to raise the level.
Dan: A real mission there.
Bruce: Yeah, It is really...
Dan: Yeah I mean you can not only upgrade the level, you can gain respect from the

know I have a violent anger.
Dan: This comes by season, by age (Laughs).
Bruce: Well, not only that. If I just given me the time to just stop for a few minutes, I will be able to control it. But unfortunately like, let's say if Lau Tat-Chuen is man enough instead of going to a newspaper or walks up to me and slaps me, that's the end of him (Laughs). I have as yet been able to turn the other cheek, man...(*Laughs*)
Dan: I think the fact right now... years ago you use to say "pick the time"...
Bruce: Pick the time?! Pick the time?! Shit, I wouldn't even say anything, I would just show up right in front of his door waiting for him. That's all there is to it. I have yet to refuse a challenge ever since I was in the United States. Wong Jack Man and all these bullshit artists. All of them. I just accept it, you know...
Dan: Yeah. Well, the fact you're able to...
Bruce: You see, the first question I ask myself is this -- Do I have any fear or any doubt about this man? I don't. And do I know what his intention is? Yes, I do... Then what the hell are you going to do about it. Nothing (*Laughs*). That's it. I mean, it takes a hell of a lot for me not to do anything than to do something.
Dan: The fact you made these decision...It's actually a process of maturity.
Bruce: That's it (pause)...Not maturity... there is no such word as "maturity." "Mat-uring...
Dan: Mat-uring?
Bruce: Damn right, man...
Dan: Continually striving...
Bruce: Shit yes. Because when there is a maturity, there is a conclusion and a cessation. That's the end, that's when the coffin is closed (Laughs).
Dan: It's always continually...
Bruce: You might be deteriorating physically in the long process of aging but, shit, man, your discovery daily is still the very same everyday.
Dan: Well, I think... you're actually getting to the point where you remember the two Chinese scrolls...
[Both Dan and Bruce recite the "Using No Way as Way; Having No Limitation as Limitation" quotes in Chinese – "Yee Mo Fat, Wai Yao Faat; Yee Mo Haan,Wai Yao Haan"]
Dan: You're reaching these points...
Bruce: That's the most important thing, man...Because where there is a way, there lies the limitation, and where there is a circumference, it traps. And when it traps, it rots. When it rots, it's lifeless.
Dan: Well, whatever you have said is making a great impact though in my training, in



my thinking of martial arts as a whole. I mean, it seems like once you've talked with you and worked this-- you would never go back to Kenpo or anything. You reach another level of understanding.

Bruce: Because like man, you know, he's constantly growing. And when he is bound by a set pattern of ideas or way of doing things, that's when he's stops growing.

Dan: That's right.

Bruce: Well I'm lucky. That's about it.

Dan: Well actually, you have influenced many people in terms of freedom from there original boundaries.

Bruce: Well I hope so.

Dan: Danny (Inosanto) was just all excited all over yesterday.

Bruce: Yeah he was at my house the night before...

Dan: He was really turned on (*Laughs*). So he doesn't want us to do anymore heavy bag kicking, he wants us to kick at something light... instep at something. We only had three people yesterday, yeah, with our little group.

Bruce: Yeah, when you use your leg it's much better use it to kick at, like the foam pad or something like that.

Dan: Yeah.

Bruce: Watch out for the side kick on air kicking too much because it's bad for the knee... the knee joint.

Dan: It's kind of dangerous, huh?

Bruce: Well, I mean, if you snap it too much without resistance at the end you know you can get hurt. (*Pause*) Well, just think of economical moves...

Dan: Yeah. There's the Kickboxing Association right on Hollywood Boulevard. I have yet to go and see it...

Bruce: They have kickboxing. You have seen kickboxing. I saw it in Thailand personally. The bantamweight champion, you know, was one of the stuntmen on the show.
Dan: Yeah.
Bruce: Well, the problem with them is that they are the “John L. Sullivan” with their legs (Laughs). I mean they have no finesse. Nothing...
Dan: No. I mean, if they manage to step in and rap the rear of your thigh and that hurts, and that’s what they try to cause the opponent to completely give up. They actually just rap into it.
Bruce: Well, not all of them they do that, you know, but you can do that when you are stationary you see, but not when you're constantly moving.



Dan: That’s true. I feel like the Japanese have incorporated the sweeping kick on the Thailand high kick. They can somehow... they can see the Thailand people with their foot in the air and the moment they kick, the Japanese move in and sweep the foot away or make a Judo throw. The Thai’s have real trouble maintaining balance because their kick is too high.
Bruce: That's right, and too obvious...
Dan: Too obvious, right...
Bruce: That's the whole deal you see. There is no suddenness, no economy.
Dan: and actually no broken rhythm either... you can see it coming.
Bruce: That's right - John L. Sullivan. That's why 80% of the knockouts are by hand.
Dan: By hand...
Dan: That’s why this crazy guy, Raymond Adler, getting all boasting...

Bruce: No, you put him in the ring, the boxer would just hit him.
Dan: Right.
Bruce: So, that goes to show you (pause)...
Dan: Well...
Bruce: OK Dan, I'm packing right now...
Dan: Yeah I know that you're busy. I just wanted to get the chance to say hello to you.
Bruce: Thank you. Glad to hear your voice again. I'm selling my house you know?
Dan: Yeah Danny (Inosanto) told me. And anything you want me to help with, clean or something like that, for instance... let me know.
Bruce: Thank you. Well, this time I'm getting the “Bekin man.” (laughs) To hell with all this goddamn too much trouble, I'll just let them do it. Right now I'm just sorting out what I need. I'm going to bring some of my books, some of my clothes and -- that's about it.
Dan: Yeah. Are you going to store things?
Bruce: Yeah.
Dan: And when you come back...
Bruce: Well depending, on how the film situation is. If it is good, then I'm going to buy another house.
Dan: Actually, I think whatever you do over there will have a tremendous impact on your work over here.
Bruce: Well depending, I mean, how the quality of it is going to be. I mean, I'm not talking about myself alone, but directing, budget wise, cinematographer wise, a lot of things, lighting, everything.
Dan: Do you think the Hong Kong films are up to standard?
Bruce: Not really but they can be.
Dan: Given the man power and the facilities.
Bruce: I mean, it's the Hollywood of China you see.
Dan: China, right. They make more films sometimes in a year than in Hollywood area.
Bruce: I mean, that's about it you know.
Dan: Now actually, in the Big Boss you speak Cantonese right?
Bruce: Yep.
Dan: Then what do they do?
Bruce: They just dub it all -- the Mandarin picture are dubbed.
Dan: I see.
Bruce: All of them.
Dan: Are they going to come over here some time? When?
Bruce: It will. Well, I mean it will be but I don't know when, because like I told you, be-

cause of the tremendous success they are really holding it back. Trying to get the best deal they can and they are trying to distribute it. “Rank” [film company] in England are trying to distribute it all over England. I don't know how the deal came about. I opened a film company recently called 'Concord.' And my partner (Raymond Chow) is coming over next week so I'll find out more about it then.

Dan: I see, good. Well, we're eagerly awaiting for these films to be here.

Bruce: I think you will like it.... [it’s called] “Tong San Tai”...”Sim Mo.”

Dan: “Sim Mo”...You’re still in the middle of it?

Bruce: I finished it... I died afterwards.

Dan: That's the historical figure?

Bruce: No, no, no. I'm Fok Yuen Gap’s student...

Dan: I see...

Bruce: You see, I am not Fok Yuen Gap himself. That is more interesting because Fok Yuen Gap is sort of limited because you know we gotta follow what the history goes. So I'm actually portraying his student.

Dan: Portraying his student?

Bruce: Yeah. There are some things -- I fought with the Japanese and the Russian and all that just like [Chinese name]. And the fight scenes are really tremendous, I mean I like them myself, so you can imagine. I enjoyed them so the regular people should really dig them.

Dan: Do they all fight in there own style, like the Russian Wrestler?



Bruce: No, no, no. The Russian fights like Karate and all these things - Boxing, Wrestling, everything all together. I bite him and everything (Laughs). Man, all hell breaks loose. At the end, you know Jo Gai – the rental area – remember the “dogs and Chinese are not allowed in the park” and all that? – remember in Shanghai?

Dan: Yeah I know the history.

Bruce: Well exactly. We are doing that, and at the end, I died under the gunfire. But it's a very worthwhile death because it's a big moment – Sim Mo Goon what it means

for the Chinese and all that. I walk out and say “Fuck you man, here I come.” I leap out and leap up into the air and they stop the frame and then ...bang, bang, bang! -- like Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid.

Dan: Yeah?

Bruce: Except they stop the frame so I'm in the middle of the air.

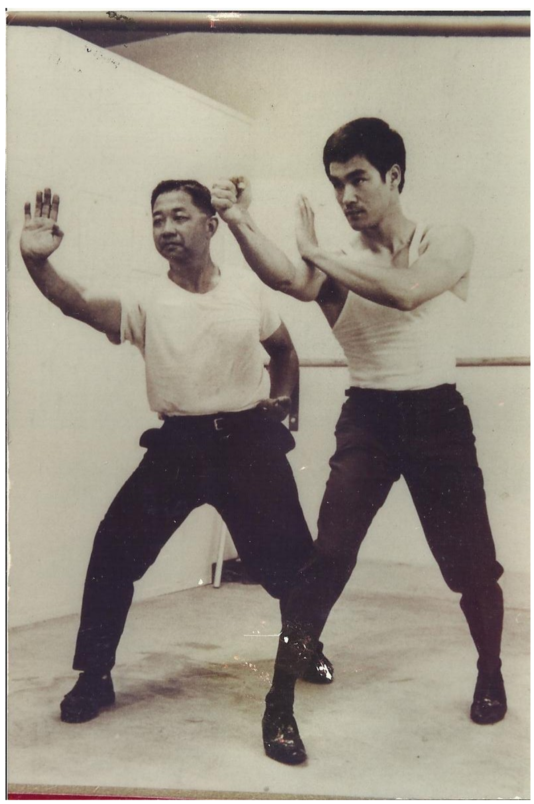
Dan: Yep, it's a very honorable end.

Bruce: Yeah, according to the Chinese fashion (Laughs). And the audience do eat it up. Boy, you should see the film goers in Hong Kong. They are very, very, ... they're too much (Laughs). I mean, when they don't like it, they just say Dooo La Pho Me Nooo Ah! -- like that ...When they do like it, they clap there hands.

Dan: They clap their hands?

Bruce: Yeah (*laughs*) that's what it is.

Dan: Well I think you're going to have more and more films coming up in that theme idea and more higher...?



Bruce: It is. In fact the third film I am going to Europe to film it. It's about a Chinese, you know, who doesn't know how to speak English who landed somewhere in a Western Country, and where he carries ancient weapons and darts and all that. The fourth one is going to be very, very much like the 'Silent Flute' except it's not, you know.

Where it shows how a man started off, you know. Well, you will see it in the future -- I mean it's very beautiful and entertaining as well.

Dan: You know, I heard there's a picture being done over here, something about Chinese Kung Fu and all that, while you were in Hong Kong?

Bruce: Yeah but it's a television deal.

Dan: Television deal - Kung Fu?

Bruce: Yeah it's called 'Kung Fu' and I was supposed to do it. But the network decided against it and 'Warner's' wants me to be in another television series. And I'm glad they decided against it (Laughs) because if not, I would have been tied up this year.

Dan: That's right. I mean, they're shooting it?

Bruce: Yeah.

Dan: Well, when you come back and do another good series. I don't think...

Bruce: Ah, I don't think...Television is really, I mean ah...

Dan: A one shot job.



Bruce: Yeah, you look at all the television series right. I mean all of them are gimmicks and shallowly treated. You look at 'Mannix' and 'Ironside'... I mean, it's all "fast money," unlike a film where you can put a few months into it and work on it. But not television man, you've gotta finish in one week...

Dan: That's right.

Bruce: ...and how can you keep up the quality every week.

Dan: Very much so.

Bruce: And people get tired of it.

Dan: Yeah. And even so... I mean, sometimes you've got...

Bruce: I mean, It's not that bad, you know what I mean Dan? ... It's my personality.

Dan: You want to actually get deeply into it and the quality of it. Make it right.

Bruce: That's right. You know money comes second.

Dan: That's right. I think sometimes that could be very much of an issue.

Bruce: That's why I disbanded all the schools of JKD, because it is very easy for a member to come in and take the agenda as the truth and the schedule as the way. You know what I mean...?

Dan: Well, I think you have to pick a few ones that our true diehard followers that don't go out and "this is JKD...", you know?
Bruce: Yeah...
Dan: Because this...
Bruce: That's why I tell Dan (Inosanto) to be careful in selecting more students...

(NOTE – This is where there is an interruption in the tape, where something has been changed or edited)

Bruce: You should help him in that area.
Dan: So that's... Yeah, you can rest [assured] on me. I've been helping, working with Dan a lot.
Bruce: Great.
Dan: We're real close together.
Bruce: Great. Well, Dan (Inosanto), what he has to... See Dan, I told him last time is that he's becoming very stylized. All the preparation before kicking and ... it seems like his consciousness is really dominating him. Something is bugging him -- you know what I mean?
Dan: Yeah. Well, I think heavy bag kicking... actually too much heavy bag kicking has affected him ... too much body twisting instead of just zoom, going right through. Instead of Boom!!
Bruce: Yeah and then get the power and momentum rather than in the preparation right out, because you can kick a heavy bag that way but you cannot kick an opponent that way.
Dan: Yeah. The instep he was checking because his toe was touching first instead of flat. But he's working on it real hard and we sort of had a taste of it. We're trying not getting too much heavy bag, rather get the suddenness of movement and just feel and work on it.
Bruce: Yeah...so...
Dan: Well, if you have any training session or something before you leave...
Bruce: Training! (*Laughs*)... How because I'm so God damn busy (Laughs)......Well anyway... But, uh, wait a minute...
Dan: Wanna see you personally too, so... (Laughs)
Bruce: Okay, man..... okay, let's see now.... I...
Dan: It'll be another year until you come back.
Bruce: Yeah, well, anyway I have your phone number. So, you know, if anything

should happen I'll give you a call.

Dan: OK - if I come over for just a few minutes, it'll be satisfying.

Bruce: OK Dan great.

Dan: Good talking to you Bruce.

Bruce: Same to you Dan.

Dan: Well take care now.

Bruce: Thanks for calling.

Dan: You're welcome Bruce.

Bruce: Thank you.

Dan: Bye bye.

THE END

(Note: Sadly, this is the last time that Daniel Lee spoke to his Sifu, Bruce Lee)

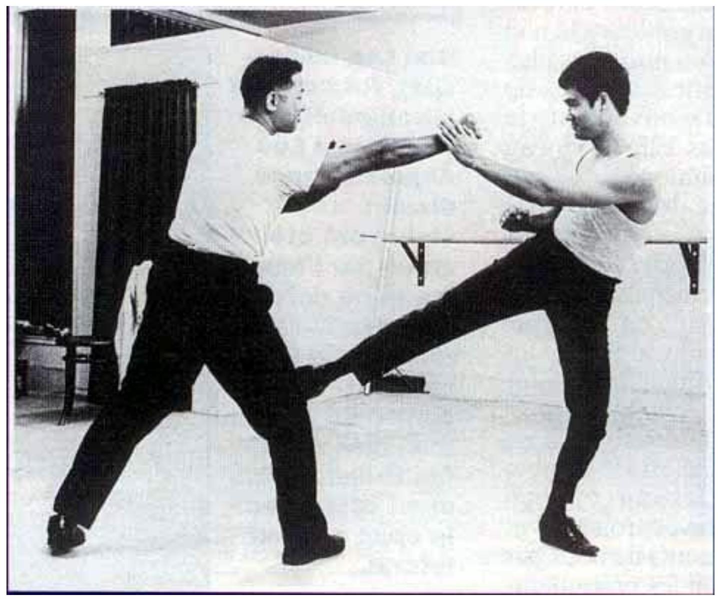


Notes

- The tournament Bruce is talking about is the "National Art (Wu-Shu) Tournament"

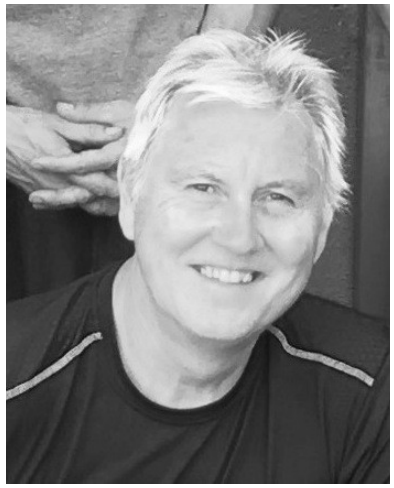
- Lo Tat-Chuen was a Hong Kong-based martial artist who thought he could make a name for himself by challenging Bruce shortly after The Big Boss came out and Lo Tat-Chuen was a Hong Kong-based martial artist who thought he could make a name for himself by challenging Bruce shortly after The Big Boss came out and Bruce became famous. He challenged Bruce publicly through the newspapers, but Bruce realized that he had nothing to prove to anybody so declined the challenge.

Western World.
Bruce: That's what I hope to do man. Because, like here, I mean the reason I'm coming back is Warner Brothers want me to do a television series, but I don't think I'll do it now. I'm going to concentrate, you know, in Hong Kong ...and do it.
Dan: Yeah. Start from there. And actually...
Bruce: And actually I might be able to expand it to here like the Italian picture, 'A Fistful of Dollars' and things like that if the quality can be uplifted. And that's what I... More and more Dan it's becoming more simple as a human being, and more I search myself. And more and more, I mean more and more the questions are listed to me and more and more I see clearly, you know.
Dan: It's really the simplicity...



Bruce: It is. It really is man. I mean, what it is, what man has to get over is the consciousness... the consciousness of himself.
Dan: And I always remember that you use to say, that you have to sharpen your tools. If your tools are working properly then you can use them...
Bruce: That's it, you see. Here it is, if you can move with your tools from any angle then you can adapt to whatever the object is in front of you.
Dan: That's right.
Bruce: And the clumsier, the more limited the object, the easier for you to pot-shot it. That's what it amounts to...
Dan: That's right. I think...
Bruce: What it is, is that it utilizes the body to come to some sort of a realization disregard whatever your pursuit happens to be. In my case... it's the pursuit of becoming moment to moment, whatever that thing is and constantly questioning myself, you know. What is this Bruce? Is it true or is it not true? Do you really mean it or not mean it? Once when I've found it out -- that's it. I mean, my coming back to refuse the television series is one of the major decisions (*Laughs*)...
Dan: That's right. You've reached the point where you've become quite philosophical... you can see the ultimate goal.
Bruce: Well, the thing is I haven't as yet been able to control my anger (*Laughs*). I

Chris Kent



With over 47 years experience, Chris Kent is widely acknowledged as one of the world's foremost authorities on Jeet Kune Do, and has gained international recognition for his knowledge and leadership in perpetuating the art, training methods, and philosophy developed by the legendary Bruce Lee. As a teacher, professional consultant, and speaker, Chris has travelled the world, teaching and sharing the benefit of his expertise in the art and philosophy of Jeet Kune Do with thousands of people.

Chris has authored 3 of the highest rated books on Jeet Kune Do: *The Encyclopedia of Jeet Kune Do, Jeet Kune Do - The Textbook,* and *Jeet Kune Do Kickboxing.* In addition he has both written for and appeared in countless martial art publications both nationally and internationally including *Inside Kung Fu, Black Belt, Martial Art Masters, Budo International, Combat* and *Martial Arts Illustrated*. He has also written and produced 3 series of training videotapes and DVDs which remain the standard of the industry. His latest book, *"LIBERATE YOURSELF–* How to Think Like Bruce Lee*" and the companion workbook* detail how individuals can apply the philosophical tenets of self-actualization utilized by Bruce Lee to their own lives.

Chris was a one of the co-founders of "The Bruce Lee Educational Foundation", a non-profit, organization created for the purpose of perpetuating Bruce Lee's art and philosophy for future generations, and for 5 years served as a member of the Board of Directors.

For further information concerning Chris and his organization Chris Kent Jeet Kune Do" please visit his website: https://www.ckjkd.com/